

Lower San Gabriel River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, March 8, 2022
10:00am – 12:30 pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
*Quynh Tran, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
*Nancy Villaseñor, City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation (Agency)
*Joseph Gonzalez, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Community)
Gabrielle Weeks, Long Beach Coalition for a Safe Environment (Community)
Alex Rojas, Central Basin Municipal Water District (Agency)
Mike O'Grady, Cerritos (Municipal)
Delfino Consunji, Downey (Municipal)
Lisa Ann Rapp, Lakewood (Municipal), Vice Chair
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Chair
Bernie Iniguez, Bellflower (Municipal)
Marlin Munoz, La Mirada (Municipal)
Vicki Smith, Whittier (Municipal)
Kekoa Anderson, OhanaVets (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Dan Knapp, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
Adam Galia, Resident (Community)

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Melissa You, Chair of the Lower San Gabriel River (LSGR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx and facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 8, 2022

The District presented meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member Delfino Consunji. Member Bernie Iniguez seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the February 8, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no Committee Member updates.

District staff provided an update:

- On March 1, the Board of Supervisors voted to continue meeting virtually, acting under the authority of Assembly Bill 361 which authorizes public committees to meet without complying with all the teleconferencing requirements of the Brown Act when the situation warrants it. The Board is

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reviewing every 30 days and will act to cover all the commissions and committees under their authority.

- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans are due April 1 to the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue. If any municipality has not submitted their Annual Plan, please do so promptly. The reporting module has been updated to increase functionality and streamline the Annual Plan process. The District hosted a information session on March 7, 2022 and will post the recording along with a FAQ on the SCW Municipal webpage.
- The SCWP Interim Guidance document is available for public review on the website. The 30-day public review period ends on March 17, 2022. Details on how to provide comments were sent via email.
- The LSGR WASC now has 5 Infrastructure Program projects, 5 Scientific Studies, and 0 Technical Resources Program projects to consider for the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP).
- It is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the Safe, Clean Water Program and are represented by the *ex parte* disclosures on each agenda. WASC members whose job connects them to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about or advocate for those projects during Stormwater Investment Plan deliberations and should avoid using their position as WASC members to advocate for projects from their home entities. Not all projects are connected to a WASC member's full-time job and must advocate for their inclusion during the managed opportunities (the application itself, presentation(s), questions from the WASC, and the public comment period). Ensuring each project gets treated fairly during discussion and voting agenda items and that all proponents have equal access to engage in the WASC discussion needs to be part of how the WASC manages itself.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Kekoa Anderson and Grace Kast provided an update on Watershed Coordinator activities:

- Sending out a survey to further identify the needs and priorities of the community at the end of the week. The survey ties into their goal of increased visibility and interaction through social media.
- Presenting at the LSGR and Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) subregion meeting on March 24, 2022.
- Leading the monthly Joint Watershed Coordinator Meeting in March 2022. A tentative agenda has been drafted with topics including Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP) watershed coordinator input and State funding opportunities.
- Giving a 3 to 5-minute presentation at the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) meeting on March 22, 2022.
- Presenting at the Gateway Water Management Authority Board meeting in April.
- Planning an educational outreach event at the Downey "Touch a Truck" event in May 2022. More information is to come. The Clean Water Vision Trailer will be present at the event.
- Planning an educational outreach event at the Al Robles Center in Pico Rivera for the summer of 2022.
- Developing more virtual workshops and events. Researching options for project tours and attending scheduled school events in 2022. The Watershed Coordinators are also considering setting up tours at project sites and holding public outreach meetings. Smaller events may include elementary school educational events and meetings.

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- Reported on the Joint LSGR and LLAR Watershed Areas Workshop held on February 17, 2022:
 - Invitation sent out to stakeholders, proponents of projects from other funding programs beginning on January 31. Invitation is available on the SCWP website.
 - Workshop included 31 attendees.
 - Agenda included presentations from SCWP, Urban Orchard Project, and WaterTalks/IRWM DACIP.

Member Joseph Gonzalez asked if there are any upcoming events for Earth Day. Watershed Coordinator Grace Kast said that the Water Replenishment District (WRD) event had been postponed. Watershed Coordinator Anderson agreed that Earth Day is a great opportunity for on-the-ground engagement and noted that they would find an event to take part in.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

6. Public Comment Period

There were five public comment cards submitted to the District prior to the meeting. The public comment cards/emails will be posted to the SCWP website.

Sarai Jimenez (OurWaterLA) expressed support for the Lakewood Equestrian Center project due to its inclusion of additional native trees, shrubs, and natural infiltration cells; community engagement incorporated in the project scope; budget for outreach; potential for diversion and detention capabilities; future possibility of onsite irrigation; and increased conductivity to Rynerson Park and the San Gabriel River Trail System.

Richard Watson (Richard Watson & Associates, Los Cerritos Watershed Group) shared support for the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Construction project. Watson provided background information on the history of the project, including that the WASC recommended one of two projects for design only last year, with the understanding that they would come back for construction. Watson stated the urgent need for the project. It is anticipated that the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board will approve a bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in two days. This project helps achieve wet-weather TMDLs. Watson emphasized that the project will likely be delayed by 15-20 years if it does not proceed now since a new artificial field will be installed soon and any below grade improvements must be constructed prior. Watson also reported that the City of Bellflower is willing to make a local match contribution.

Oliver Galang (Craftwater), spoke on behalf of the City of Bellflower, stating that the City is highly committed to the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project. The City of Bellflower will provide approximately \$900,000 in matching funds towards the project and \$2 million for park improvements. As a result of this match contribution, the City can reduce its initial first year funding request from \$15.6 million to \$13.6 million.

Watson asked the LSGR WASC to consider design-only funding for the Heartwell Park at Clark Channel Stormwater Capture Project over a two-year period for \$2.82 million rather than the initial request for both design and construction funding which totals \$23.8 million.

Okina Dor (City of Artesia) stated that the City of Artesia has been actively seeking grant funding, but they have been hindered by projects not being "shovel-ready." Dor urged the WASC to fund all the design requests today. John Hunter added that the City of Artesia wants to be ready to receive federal funding, particularly from the Build Back Better Program once those funds are made available.

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7. Discussion

a. Summary of Scientific Studies from the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP)

A summary of the Scientific Studies from the SCCWRP was sent to WASC members last week for review. District staff pulled up the preliminary ranking results, noting that 15 of 16 WASC members submitted their rankings for the Infrastructure Projects and 11 of 16 WASC members submitted their rankings for the Scientific Studies.

Member Gonzalez asked if the Gateway Pathfinding Analysis proponent had considered the recommendation to have a technical advisory committee. Brad Wardynski (Craftwater) said they intend to treat the WASC as the technical advisory committee. Traci Gleason (OhanaVets) shared that the project team's connection with the Watershed Coordinator role ensures a natural level of coordination.

District staff displayed the SIP tool to show project funding details.

b. Lower San Gabriel River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan. Safe Clean Water (SCW) Portal & LSGR Scoring Rubric

i. Infrastructure Program (IP)

1. Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project – City of Artesia
2. Lakewood Equestrian Center – City of Lakewood
3. Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project (Construction) – City of Bellflower
4. York Field Stormwater Capture Project – City of Whittier
5. Heartwell Park at Clark Channel Stormwater Capture Project – City of Long Beach

ii. Scientific Studies

1. Community-Centered Optimization of Nature-Based BMPs (Best Management Practices) Starting with the Gaffey Nature Center Facility
2. Microplastics in LA County Stormwater
3. Regional Pathogen Reduction Study
4. Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis (GAP Analysis) – Phase 2
5. Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation

Chair You prefaced the discussion by announcing that all Infrastructure Project and Scientific Study project proponents are present and available to answer questions live during the meeting. District staff showed a map of the funded projects, funded design projects, and considered projects. The map is available under the “Resources” tab of the SCWP website. Vice Chair Lisa Rapp and Member Consunji clarified details about the map legend.

District Staff reminded the WASC that they have the discretion to partially fund projects, but noted that this practice is discouraged because a goal of the SCWP is to support projects in realizing their impact. Vice Chair Rapp asked if this was true in past years. District Staff confirmed it was true in past years, emphasizing the SCWP's enduring commitment to long-term planning.

Member Consunji asked how close to the \$16 million SIP total they would be if the WASC chose to fund the top four Infrastructure Projects and the top two Scientific Studies. District

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Staff shared the SIP tool and clarified that the amounts shown include projected construction costs. Vice Chair Rapp observed that under this scenario, the WASC would be significantly over budget for the following two years.

Member Consunji asked if any project proponents would be willing to defer construction costs to later years. John Hunter and Okina Dor (City of Artesia) shared that the Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project would be willing to defer construction costs. Vice Chair Rapp shared that the Lakewood Equestrian Center would also be willing to defer construction, since it will take time to complete design and permitting. Member Iniguez shared that they do not think the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project could delay construction. Member Iniguez will meet with CraftWater, the project developer, to discuss design on March 10.

Member Iniguez asked about the status of the projects approved under previous funding rounds (e.g., Hermosillo Park), and whether those projects' funds could be deferred. Chair You echoed the request for their status. No representatives were available to give a status update on the Hermosillo Park project. District Staff said they would follow up after the meeting.

Member Consunji suggested that if construction costs are deferred, the WASC could fund the top four Infrastructure Projects and the top three Scientific Studies. District Staff created a new scenario in the SIP tool to demonstrate how that would affect the budget. Vice Chair Rapp suggested altering the funding for Lakewood Equestrian Center Project to provide \$1,724,000 in fiscal year (FY) 23-24, \$5 million in FY 24-25, and \$5 million in FY 25-26.

Member Gonzalez commented that the Cerritos Park project was driving the SIP overbudget and recommended that projects bring a minimum of 20% matching funds in the future.

Member Vicki Smith shared that the York Field Stormwater Capture Project will not start construction until FY 24-25 and will use some municipal funds to provide matching. District Staff reflected these changes in the SIP tool by shifting the proposed FY 23-24 and FY 24-25 construction costs by one year.

Member Mike O'Grady talked about the Cerritos Regional Park project's construction schedule, noting they want to commence design early in the next fiscal year. Vice Chair Rapp asked for clarification about whether the WASC approved funding for design only, or whether they approved design and construction for Cerritos Regional Park together as a package. District Staff clarified that the WASC only approved design for the project. Vice Chair Rapp suggested that when the WASC reviews the project's construction package request, they redistribute the construction costs. Member O'Grady expressed a willingness to follow Vice Chair Rapp's suggestion and will be considered during design along with some local matching funds.

Chair You asked District Staff how many programs were approved for the SIP last year. District Staff said last year's SIP included two Infrastructure Projects, one Scientific Study, and one Technical Resources Program project.

Member Consunji asked whether any ongoing projects from the first two fiscal years could carry over funding to future fiscal years and if so, how much money would be carried over. District Staff answered that this would be indicated in the Quarterly Reports and that the carry-over amounts would not affect the available budget, since it is already in the applicant's hand. Those figures do not affect future planning for the SIP.

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District Staff illustrated a funding scenario that includes the top four Infrastructure Projects and top three Scientific Studies, and involves pushing the construction funding for the Lakewood Equestrian Center and York Field Stormwater Capture projects back by one year. Under that scenario, the total 5-year budget was 140% allocated, with overages in FY 23-24, 24-25, and 25-26. This included the assumed construction costs. District Staff reminded the WASC that Technical Resources Program projects which were previously funded will eventually come back to the WASC to request Infrastructure Program funding.

Considering the past and new proposed projects, Chair You conveyed that it will be difficult for the WASC to grant full funding. Projects need to start looking into local matching funds.

Member Consunji asked the City of Artesia if they would be willing to defer construction costs for Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project. Dor replied that the City of Artesia is willing to ask for \$2 million dollars in FY 23-24 and split the difference for the next two fiscal years. Hunter observed that all the projects being considered by the WASC have merit, and noted that someone would have to defer funding. Vice Chair Rapp shared that SCWP Municipal Return funds may also be available to support the Lakewood Equestrian Center, though the project proponents for the Lakewood Equestrian Center do not know how much yet. Dor shared that the City of Artesia is in an analogous situation.

Chair You asked District Staff to provide a synopsis of the scenario under consideration and clarified that the budget is not inclusive of projects that may apply in future years. District Staff shared that the SIP is still 140% allocated for the next five years. Chair You and Vice Chair Rapp concluded that the WASC cannot fund the top four Infrastructure Projects.

Vice Chair Rapp suggested that the WASC revisit the bacteria study, considering it is large and costly (\$8 million). Vice Chair Rapp asked whether the other WASCs are participating in the study. District Staff shared that the Upper San Gabriel River and South Santa Monica Bay WASCs have funded the study in the past. Tori Klug (Regional Coordination, Stantec) shared that the Santa Clara River WASC also recently approved their SIP for this year and included the study, which brings the total of WASCs funding the bacteria study up to four.

Member Consunji suggested the WASC look at the scenario for funding three Infrastructure Projects and two Scientific Studies. Chair You added that not all WASC members have submitted their rankings for the Scientific Studies, though most submitted their rankings of the Infrastructure Projects.

Member O'Grady stated that if the Gateway Pathfinding Study were included in the SIP for FY 23-24, the SIP would still be under budget for that year. Member O'Grady expressed support for the Pathfinding Study, stating that the WASC would have better guidance on which projects to approve for construction once the study is complete.

Dor noted that projects need to have completed their design phase in order to be competitive for Measure W dollars and other funding resources. Dor added that the City of Artesia does not wish to be passed over year after year, and noted that they may not have matching funds to contribute for construction if they aren't included in the SIP this year. Dor suggested this may be true for other project proponents as well.

Vice Chair Rapp asked if the SIP would be kicked back by the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) if it included overages. Vice Chair Rapp asked District Staff if SIPs had been approved with overages in the past. District Staff said they cannot predict what the ROC would do. Chair

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You asked whether the Santa Clara River SIP included overages in future years. Klug replied that the Santa Clara River SIP was under budget with a total of 62% budget allocation over 5 years.

Member Gonzalez observed that if each project were to provide 25% matching funds, the budget could be met for this scenario.

Watershed Coordinator Kast recognized the difficulty of the situation for the WASC members and shared that the watershed coordinators suggest providing adequate funding for small- and medium-sized projects that were developed based on public engagement and outreach. Watershed Coordinator Kast said that some of the SIP scenarios discussed would not leave funding for those projects under future SIPs. Vice Chair Rapp pointed out that the Lakewood Equestrian Center Project's community engagement component was done prior to submitting the request. Vice Chair Rapp emphasized that the public engagement process was extensive and helped develop the project, and this was evident by OurWaterLA's support letter. Vice Chair Rapp expressed that the project is an example of the type of project that the watershed coordinators aim to help develop.

Regarding Chair You's previous question on the ROC's stance toward over-allocated SIPs, Klug added that the ROC provided feedback on the Upper San Gabriel River WASC's SIP two years ago noting concerns about over-allocating funding for future years and not leaving room for funding for community-driven projects in the future. Chair You drew the conclusion that the SIP overage in FY 24-25 of 223% would result in it being rejected by the ROC.

Member Consunji suggested scenario if the SIP could only fund two Infrastructure Projects and two Scientific Studies. There would still be overages in FY 24-25 and the overall budget. Member O'Grady suggested delaying the Cerritos Sports Complex Project construction allocation by two years. Member O'Grady added that although every project is good, the WASC is charged with determining which projects will benefit the watershed most. Member O'Grady suggested the WASC should find a way to objectively measure the watershed benefits provided by each project and observed that the WASC is just shifting projects around in the SIP tool to make the numbers work rather than prioritizing project benefits.

Vice Chair Rapp expressed full support for the Pathfinding study, noting that it would help answer some of the technical questions about how well the projects will achieve better stormwater quality. Member Consunji added that it is important for the projects to be geographically spread, since all property owners pay the parcel tax.

Member Gonzalez asked if the York Field Storm Water Capture project had any features they would be willing to remove for the approval of the SIP since it has a much larger budget compared to the other proposed projects. Member O'Grady stated that from their notes the York Field Project captured water from 2400 acres of watershed compared to the 758 acres from the Bellflower Simms Project and 290 from the Lakewood Equestrian Center. Member O'Grady reasoned that this was more than double the drainage area of the combined drainage areas of the other two projects and this justified the elevated budget of the project. Oliver Galang (CraftWater) supported this comment and stated that during the design phase, they could optimize design as well as pursue other sources of grant funding.

Vice Chair Rapp asked if the WASC would be voting on this today. Chair You expressed doubt that the WASC would be able to vote on this, otherwise the SIP would be sent back by the ROC with the overages. Chair You also added that the Committee members should submit

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their rankings for the Scientific Studies, since the top 3 studies are close in the rankings. Chair You also asked that all project proponents take a close look at their numbers for project funding.

Vice Chair Rapp added that the Lakewood Equestrian Center project would have an internal discussion about acquiring a local match for construction.

Member Alex Rojas also suggested that the WASC should explain the situation to project proponents so that they may produce some number of dollars to match the funding provided by the SIP. Vice Chair Rapp also said that this would be beneficial since projects with an unchanged total budget would not have to be sent back to the Scoring Committee.

Dor stated that from the City of Artesia's perspective, the situation to acquire other sources of funding is often difficult since many funding opportunities would like the project's design phase to be completed. Vice Chair Rapp said that they understand the frustration since Measure W does not allow small cities to build up much of a fund. Member Consunji mentioned that City of Downey committed \$2 million to start the design phase of their project to be more competitive when pursuing construction funds.

Chair You requested that the District Staff provide an update on the Hermosillo project as well as the other projects approved in prior funding years. District Staff agreed to this request. Chair You also asked that Committee Members submit their rankings for the Scientific Studies and Infrastructure Projects.

Member Gabrielle Weeks asked if it was possible to change rankings based on the discussion. Chair You answered that it was possible since they have not yet been finalized.

District Staff stated that all scenarios proposed during the discussion had been saved and are accessible in the SIP tool.

8. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items

The voting item to approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendation for the LSGR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review was postponed to the next meeting.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting of the LSGR WASC is Tuesday April 12, 2022. See the SCWP website for meeting details, including timing and length.

Topics for the next agenda include:

- a. Lower San Gabriel River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan
- b. Voting item to approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the LSGR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee.

11. Adjournment

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Chair You thanked WASC members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

LSGR WASC - March 8, 2022

		Quorum Present				Voting Items
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 2-8-2022 Meeting Minutes
Agency	FCD	Julian Juarez	x	Ramy Gindi		y
Agency	Central Basin	Alex Rojas	x			y
Agency	Water Replenishment District	Rob Beste		Aimee Zhao	x	y
Agency	Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Quynh Tran	x	y
Agency	City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation	Stephen Scott		Nancy Villaseñor	x	y
Community Stakeholder	Conservation Corps of Long Beach	Dan Knapp		Irene Lopez-Muro		
Community Stakeholder	Resident	Adam Galia				
Community Stakeholder	Rivers Mountains Conservancy	Mark Stanley		Joseph Gonzalez	x	y
Community Stakeholder	Long Beach Coalition for a Safe Environment	Gabrielle Weeks	x			y
Community Stakeholder						
Municipal Members	Cerritos	Mike O'Grady	x			y
Municipal Members	Downey	Delfino Consunji	x	Dan Mueller		y
Municipal Members	Lakewood	Lisa Ann Rapp		Konya Vivanti	x	a
Municipal Members	Long Beach	Melissa You	x	Wataru Kumagai		y
Municipal Members	Bellflower	Bernie Iniguez	x	Glen Kau		y
Municipal Members	La Mirada	Marlin Munoz	x			y
Municipal Members	Whittier	Vicki Smith	x	Kyle Cason		
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	OhanaVets	Kekoa Anderson	x	Grace Kast	x	NA
Total Non-Vacant Seats		16			Yes (Y)	12
Total Voting Members Present		14			No (N)	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	1
Community Stakeholder		2			Total	13
Municipal Members		7				Approved

Attendance
LSGR WASC - March 8, 2022

Aimee Zhao - WRD	Lonnie Chung
Alexander Iglesias - District	Lori Wolfe - consultant
Andrew Kim	Marlin Munoz - La Mirada
Andrew Gray - University of California, Riverside	Melanie Morita - LACFCD
Bernie Iniguez - City of Bellflower	Melissa You - Long Beach
Brad Wardynski - Craftwater (on behalf of GWMA)	Michelle Kim - John L Hunter and Associates
Bryce Lee - John L. Hunter & Associates	Mike O'Grady - City of Cerritos
Central Basin MWD Rojas - CBMWD	Nancy Villasenor
City of Whittier Carson - City of Whittier	Natalie Rivera-Estrada - City of Bellflower
City of Long Beach Kumagi - City of Long Beach	Okina Dor - City of Artesia
Delfino Consunji - City of Downey	Oliver Galang - Craftwater Engineering
Donna Tran - LA County Public Works	Qunyh Tran
Elizabeth Lambe	Richard Watson & Associates, Inc Millet - RWA
G Weeks	Richard Watson - Richard Watson & Associates for Los Cerritos Channel Watershed Group
Grace Kast - OhanaVets	Robert Gomez - LACFCD
Joe Venzon - LA County	Sarai Jimenez - Our Water LA (OWLA)
John Hunter	Sahriar Eftekhazadeh - SEITec
Joseph Gonzalez - Rivers and Mountains Conservancy	Stephanie Tong - LACFCD - LACFCD
Julian Juarez - LACFCD	Tetra Tech Schreiner - Tetra Tech
Kala Anderson	Tori Klug (Regional Coord.) - Stantec (Regional Coordinator)
Kekoa Anderson - LSGR WC	Traci Gleason - Ohana Vets
kelli tunnicliff - lakewood	Vicki Smith - City of Whittier
Konya Vivanti - Lakewood	WSP Diaz-Carreras - WSP
Lisa Rapp - Lakewood	